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On the cover:
Pavlo Milcharek, owner of Lviv's
"Galychanka" factory and brand

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Ukraine Turns 25!

To mark the occasion,
Lviv Today chooses 25 Ukrainian
"moments to remember"

It's been 25 years since Ukraine finally achieved independence and there are no shortages of ways to celebrate the occasion. Festivals, exhibitions, parties, music and dance events – it seems like everyone has found their own way to mark this momentous achievement. So we here at Lviv Today figured there was no better way for us to celebrate than to mark the greatest achievements that the country has put on display in Ukraine's first



quarter-century. It's not so easy to break down 25 years of a nation into just 25 moments, so we've broken them into 5 broad categories: Culture, Technology, Sports, Politics, and Honourable Mentions. Make a list yourself and see how many you can guess? Or go to our Facebook page to let us know which ones we've missed. Happy reading and Happy Independence Day!

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25 Ukrainian "moments to remember"

Top 5 Culture Moments

#5 – Pinsel at the Louvre: Ivan Pinsel, better known as Johann Georg Pinsel, was a dynamic late Baroque sculptor in Galicia. He was responsible for many of the spectacular 18th-Century works, including Lviv's wonderful St. George's Cathedral. His outstanding works are still admired today – not only at Lviv's Pinsel Museum, but also at a special 2013 exhibition at the world's most famous museum: The Louvre. Unlike his works, Pinsel's name was nearly lost to history. It was only in 1993, with the discovery of the Buchach Roman Catholic registries, that this distinctive artist's identity was discovered.

#4 – Ukraine Shines at Eurovision: Ukraine is a nation that is loaded with talent and perhaps nowhere has it been recognised as often than at Eurovision. The popular European pop music spectacle has made household names of many of Ukraine's modern musical heroes. The list is a 'who's who' of Ukrainian music – Oleksandr Ponomarev (2003), Ruslana (2004), Verka Serduchka (2007), Ani Lorak (2008), Svetlana Loboda (2009), Alyosha (2010), and Jamala (2016). Despite participating in only 13 contests, Ukraine has nine Top 10 placements, six Top 5 finishes, two runners-up (Serduchka & Lorak) and two champions (Ruslana & Jamala).

#3 – Patriotism Becomes Chic: Ukraine has been in the forefront of international thought a lot recently (and not for particularly pleasant reasons), but its reach has extended far beyond the front page—whether you were aware or not, the Ukrainian influence has fully arrived in our closets. Whether it's festival girl, wearing an embroidered peasant shirt hailing from the Eastern European region with a pair of denim cut-offs, or the Slavic red patterns on the runway at Valentino spring 2015 couture, Ukrainian traditional costume has knowingly and unknowingly

permeated fashion for years, and now the spotlight on the country's aesthetic is in full swing. The comeback of the traditional designing roots of Ukrainian culture is somehow connected to nationalism and patriotism. Many Ukrainian designers have been feeling the necessity of showing their distinct peculiarities and cultural directions to the world. Lviv's Oksana Karavanska have been using the ethnic motifs for years, including famously at New York Fashion Week in 2003. Another great tribute for the positive inspirational plague over the fashion world should be given to the newly set brand and design house Vyshyvanka by Vita Kin. It's worth considering whether the rise of Ukrainian traditional costume in fashion is more than just au courant street-style bait. Historically, Ukrainians have attempted to separate themselves from the perception of their country as only "Little Russia," especially now, when the political state is one of unrest (from the demonstrations in EuroMaidan to Russia's invasion of Crimea). There is a thought that the recent use of Ukrainian dress isn't just a fashion statement, it's a unifying statement. Today such fashion symbols as the vyshyvanka (embroidered shirt), tryzub (trident), and oseledets (Cossack hairstyle) have become mainstays of the fashion world. From the capital of Kyiv to the patriotic city of Lviv, vyshyvanka is the staple uniform for women, men, and children, who sport traditional and modern incarnations of the sartorial piece of history.

#2 – Ukraine at Cannes: As noted above, Ukraine seems to have an unfair advantage when it comes to talent and when you look at the country's success at the world-famous Cannes Film Festival, you can begin to see why. From Igor Strembitsky's impassioned short film Wayfarers that took the 2005 Palme d'Or in the short film competition, to Marina Vroda's Phys. Ed. Class memoire that took the 2011 Palme d'Or in the same category, to Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy's visionary

no-subtitled, sign language drama feature that walked away with the Canne's 2014 Gan Foundation Support for Distribution Award along with a slew of other prizes. The modern Golden Age of Ukrainian filmmaking continues to make the world take notice.

#1 – The Okean Elzy Phenomenon: No discussion on modern Ukrainian culture would be complete without the mention of Leopoldin rock legends Okean Elzy. Not only popular in Ukraine, the group is quite possibly the biggest musical act to come out of any post-Soviet country – including Russia. Formed in the early days of Ukrainian independence in Lviv in 1994, the band has released 9 studio albums, 2 compilation albums, and a slew of popular songs to both critical and commercial success. The band continues to sell out stadiums – including 70,000+ in Kyiv and 50,000+ in Lviv – as part of their world tour in support of their newest album – 2016's Bez Mez. These are must-see events, so be sure to check out these modern legends as soon as you get the chance!

Top 5 Technology Moments

#5 – iBlazr Blazes Trail: Conceptor, a Ukrainian start-up that specialises in mobile phone accessories, hit it big with their very first design – a smart LED flashlight for smart phones named iBlazr. Described as "the world's most ultimate wireless flash", the technology is now available in 108 official Apple retailers worldwide. The flashlight was funded through Kickstarter, a popular crowdfunding initiative, and has been so successful that they have launched another new technology – a super energy efficient LED case for iPhones. The technology harnesses electromagnetic energy from your phone, so no wires or charging is necessary. Keep your eyes open for more amazing products from these technological wizards!

#4 – Video Game Zombies Rule! When Ukrainian video game developer GSC Game World came out with the first-person shooter survival horror game S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Shadow of Chernobyl in 2007, little did they know they'd developed a title that would become one of the most popular games of 2007 and spawn two hit sequels (Clear Sky & Call of Pripyat). Loosely based on the 1979 film Stalker, itself an adaptation of the novel Roadside Picnic, the game is set near the Chernobyl accident site and has players dealing with an alternate reality where a second explosion at the doomed reactor causes unusual changes to the surrounding environment. The game was praised for its visuals and gameplay and still has an 8.2 rating at IGN.

#3 – Ukraine's Antarctic Outreach: The National Antarctic Scientific Center of Ukraine purchased the aging Vernadsky Research Base (formerly Faraday Station) from the UK in 1996 to establish programmes on meteorology, upper atmospheric physics, geomagnetism, ozone, seismology, glaciology, ecology, biology, and physiology research. Bought for the token amount of 1 British pound, the base employs 12 Ukrainian scientists. In addition to all of the research, the base is known for having the "Southernmost Bar in the World", where visitors can purchase shots of vodka for \$3 USD. There is also a souvenir shop and post office, where you'll need a \$6 stamp to send the memento to your loved one.

#2 – Ukraine in Space: Ukraine inherited a proud Soviet space heritage after gaining independence, with the Ukrainian city of Dnipropetrovsk one of the primary cities for the development of missile and rocket



technology. The first Ukrainian to fly to the great beyond with the blue and yellow flag on his spacesuit was Leonid Kadenyuk in November 1997, when he hitched a ride with the US space shuttle Columbia. Ukrainian space scientists also worked as part of the Sea Launch consortium alongside counterparts from Norway, Russia, and the USA. Sea Launch was a service that launched commercial payloads from a mobile maritime launch platform near the Equator. The project was awarded the Space Foundation's Space Achievement Award in 2000.

#1 – Biggest Plane in the World: Although the Antonov An-225 Mriya aircraft was designed in Kyiv in the late 80s – before Ukraine gained its independence – it gained its fame long after the fall of the

Soviet Union. Powered by six turbofan engines, it holds records for the longest and heaviest aircraft ever assembled. Codenamed "the Cossack" by NATO, the aircraft was initially designed to transport the Buran spacecraft. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the aircraft was refurbished and now acts as a commercial airline specialising in carrying oversized payloads. It holds world records for air-lifted single item (189,980 kg), airlifted total payload (253,820 kg), and longest piece of air cargo (two 42 m wind turbine blades).

Top 5 Sports Moments

#5 – Ukraine at the World Cup: Ukraine had a proud football history before the break-up of the Soviet Union, including famously starting 7 of 11 players for the USSR runners-up squad at EURO 88, but were forced to start from scratch after gaining independence. Despite developing world class talents such as 2004 Ballon d'Or winner (for European Footballer of the Year) Andriy Shevchenko, the team couldn't manage to take the last step of qualifying for a major tournament, falling out at the playoff stage three separate times (1998, 2000, 2002). Finally, in late 2005 in Dnipropetrovsk, midfielder Ruslan Rotan scored an 86' minute equaliser to win the group and put Ukraine in its first World Cup. The team didn't disappoint either, dropping a 0:4 match to Spain before knocking off Saudi Arabia (4:0) and Tunisia (1:0) to set up a playoff date with undefeated Switzerland. After a 0:0 draw, Ukraine went through to the quarterfinals after not conceding a single penalty kick. The magical run would end there, with a 0:3 defeat to eventual champion Italy.

#4 – Baiul Wins 1st Olympic Gold: While Ukraine had become independent well before the 1992 Olympics, the country was unable to register in time with the IOC to compete under their own colours – much to the chagrin of 1992 men's figure skating champion, Odesa's Victor Petrenko (who still considers himself the first "true" Ukrainian Olympic champion). By the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway, Ukraine was competing as its own country with Petrenko as its flagbearer. But the darling was 16-year-old Oksana Baiul, who had shocked the skating world by winning the 1993 World Championships. Baiul had to overcome a difficult life – she was orphaned 3 years earlier and was living with Petrenko and his coach in Odesa. In the highly anticipated women's event (due to the Tonya Harding / Nancy Kerrigan fiasco), Baiul became Ukraine's first Olympic champion.





#3 – Ukraine Hosts EURO 2012: Many observers were sceptical when Ukraine and Poland decided to launch a bid to host Europe during the EURO 2012 competition. The tournament had never before been held so far east, neither team was a traditional European powerhouse, and there were plenty of other quality bids to choose from. In fact, the bid barely made it to the final round, collecting a single vote more than the eliminated Turkish bid. Italy was the frontrunner going into the bid, but Ukraine & Poland secured the tournament in April 2007. Lviv was one of 4 Ukrainian cities chosen to host, while Kyiv was chosen as the site for the final. Ukraine scored a memorable 2:1 come-from-behind victory over Sweden in their opening game, thanks to two markers by aging captain Shevchenko, but fell to France (0:2) and England (0:1) to bow out. Improved roads, fast trains, new airports, and refurbished stadiums – including Lviv’s sparking new Arena Lviv – remain as reminders of the tournament’s legacy.

#2 – Bubka’s World Records: There are few athletes in the last half century that have been as dominant as Ukrainian pole vaulter Sergei Bubka. For most of his career, his closest competitor was the record book. An Olympic champion and 6-time world champion, Bubka broke the world record an astounding 35 (!) times during his career (outdoor 17x, indoor 18x). From 1984 until 2014, Bubka held both the indoor and outdoor records for all but a few seconds (it was bested once, but he reset the record on the very next jump!). He was the first person to jump 6.10 metres, which he did in 1991 – no other athlete cleared 6.07 metres until 2014! In fact – he is responsible for nearly half (45%) of the times that 6 metres

has been cleared by all athletes! 15 years after his retirement, he still holds the world outdoor record (6.14 metres). He has won all kinds of awards and has become nearly as dominant in sports politics, as an effective and influential member of both the IAAF (athletics) and IOC.

#1 – Klitschkos Own the Boxing World: It’d be difficult to overstate the impact that Ukraine’s Klitschko brothers have had on boxing. For 16 years, from 1999-2015, at least one of the brothers was World Champion for all but a few months. Even before they were dominant world champions, they were dominant amateurs – Wladimir winning the 1996 Olympic gold and Vitaliy a world championship runner-up. Not only were they the first brothers to be co-World Champions, but they managed to hold all 6 World Champion titles between them for nearly 2.5 years (2011-13). Their complete dominance of the world heavyweight division led to a Ukrainian boxing revolution that saw the sport become one of the most popular in the country and produce boxers like two-time Olympic champion Vasyl Lomachenko and Lviv’s-own Olympic champion Oleksandr Usyk – who won the WBO inter-continental title in Lviv in 2014 fighting for the Klitschko brothers’ K2 Promotions.

Top 5 Honourable Mention Moments

#5 – The Ukrainian Bond Girl: Ukraine is quite well known abroad for producing some of the world’s most attractive singers, dancers, models, and actresses – but until Olga Kurylenko came along, none had been chosen to play the lucrative role as a ‘Bond girl’. Casted in 2008’s Quantum of Solace alongside Daniel Craig as James Bond, Berdiansk, Ukraine’s Kurylenko played Camille Montes, a Bolivian intelligence officer looking to seek revenge on the man that killed her family. Her success in that role, and the fame that it brought her, has allowed her to continue to feature in big-time films, including 2013’s Oblivion with Tom Cruise and 2014’s The Water Diviner with Russell Crowe.

#4 – The Pope Visits Ukraine: Back in 2001, just 10 years after Ukraine gained independence, Pope John Paul II made a somewhat controversial visit to Ukraine at the behest of President Kuchma and Bishops of both the Greek and Roman Catholic Churches. The Pope was hoping to facilitate cooperation between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches during his visit, but was boycotted by leaders of the Russian Orthodox

Church. The popular Pope spoke about the need for Ukraine to embrace the West and for Kuchma to push forward with pro-Western reforms. He also reminded Ukrainians of “the terrible years of Soviet dictatorship” and that Ukraine’s natural identity is Western European. The Pope visited sites in both Kyiv and Lviv as part of his only trip to the country.

#3 – Police Get Complete Revamp: While there have been many reforms enacted since the fall of the Yanukovich government in early 2014, among the most easy to recognise is the change in the country’s police services. By abandoning the military-style Soviet uniforms of the past and adopting chic American-style uniforms in their place, Ukrainian police now have the look of their European counterparts. More than that, an emphasis on youth and vitality has made these officers a photogenic hit for selfie-takers. With the force getting a complete revamp in 2016 – with all former police needing to re-apply and pass probation – there is hope that finally this much-maligned service in Ukraine will finally instil the confidence Ukrainians so desperately desire.

#2 – The Budapest Memorandum: When Ukraine declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, it immediately became the owner of the world’s 3rd-largest nuclear arsenal. While the command control of those nukes remained in Russia, the presence of the weapons in the country proved both an obstacle and an opportunity. So by late 1994, a decision was made on what to do with them – give them to Russia in return for security guarantees for Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Signed by the 3 newly independent states alongside Russia, the US, and the UK, it was a major coup for peace and stability in the region – at least until the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014. The agreement will now serve either as evidence in an upcoming international law case or as a stark reminder that words on paper are no match to nuclear weapons in hand.

#1 – UNESCO Recognises Lviv: Lviv received major recognition when in 1998 its historical centre became the first place in Ukraine to be recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site since independence. The site was chosen for its mix of Eastern European, Italian, and German architectural styles and for the number of ethnic groups, including Jewish and Armenian, that lived interdependently in the area. Today, the Lviv Historic Centre Ensemble covers 120 hectares of the Medieval and Old Rus parts of the city right up to St. George’s Cathedral. This region features some of Lviv’s most iconic spots, such as Rynok Square, High Castle, the Dormition Church, the city’s Arsenal fortifications, the Armenian Church, and the Church of the Assumption. Since the recognition, Lviv has matured into one of Ukraine’s leading tourist destinations.

Top 5 Politics Moments

#5 – Ukraine Turns Orange: Late 2004 was a time of turmoil in Ukraine. Political and economic reforms were slow, President Kuchma was barred from running for re-election due to term limits, and he was embroiled in the controversy surrounding the murder of Lviv journalist Georgiy Gongadze. The campaign was a bitter affair between the Kuchma’s Prime Minister and heir



apparent Viktor Yanukovich and pro-European leaders Victor Yushchenko and Yuliya Tymoshenko. When Yanukovich was announced the winner despite losing the exit polls, widespread protest over the electoral fraud broke out around the country. Taking its name for the colour of Yushchenko's party, the Orange Revolution became a major cultural affair. In the end, the protests were successful and the result of the fraudulent election was overturned. Yushchenko won the runoff vote and Yanukovich worked to rehabilitate his political career.

#4 – EU-Bound: The defining geopolitical question of Ukraine's first quarter-century was whether to develop closer ties with Russia and its neighbour states or with the European Union. At the same time, this question was the driving force behind most of Ukraine's Presidential elections as well. The question came to a head in late 2013 when President Yanukovich decided to renege on a campaign promise and abandon signing the Association Agreement with the EU. Those events led to the EuroMaidan (see below), which culminated in his fleeing the country. In March 2014, just one month after he left, the Association Agreement was signed. The agreement is the first step in Ukraine's desire to join the EU and will lead to increased trade, access to the European Investment Bank, visa-free travel for Ukrainians to the EU, equal rights for workers, and the modernisation of the economy. It was the culmination of 25 years of work and desire by the Ukrainian people.

#3 – Volunteer Patriots Protect the Motherland:

While 2014 was a very difficult year for Ukraine, one thing is certain – there was no shortage of patriots willing to step up to protect the motherland. The year began with tens of thousands of Ukrainians congregating in Kyiv's Independence Square, spending night and day in the cold, to stand up for their beliefs in a European-oriented Ukraine with a far less corrupt government. The many that paid the ultimate sacrifice in the protests were nicknamed 'Heaven's Hundred'. But they weren't they only patriots to fight for their country that year. After the Russian annexation of Crimea and assistance to rebel separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk, many stepped up to fight in volunteer battalions, such as the Azov and Donbas battalions, to protect their country. To honour the sacrifice of the many volunteers that fought for (and still fight for) Ukraine, the government introduced a new title – Order of the Heaven's Hundred Heroes – for civil courage, patriotism, and selfless service to the Ukrainian people and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

#2 – The Revolution of Dignity: Everything seemed to be going fine on the day of November 21st, 2013 – at least until President Yanukovich announced seemingly from nowhere that he would abandon Ukraine's course for the EU in light of a closer relationship with Russia's Eurasian Customs Union. The protests grew in size and intensity following his decision to forcefully remove protesters from Kyiv's Independence Square on November 30th, with protesters occupying central government buildings in Kyiv and across Ukraine

and toppling many statues of Lenin. Events became more dangerous after the passing of the so-called "Dictatorship Laws" in mid-January before culminating in the death of 100 protesters by Berkut police forces on February 18-20 – a brutal end to three months of protests. Yanukovich fled the country, a pro-European government was elected, and the country moved to solidify its ties with Europe while severing ties with its Soviet past.

#1 – Ukraine Finally Gets its Independence:

We couldn't be celebrating 25 years, if there was no birth in the first place, right? After several aborted attempts at independence in the past, the Soviet reforms of the late 1980s finally brought about what many Ukrainians had until then only dreamt about – their own state. The first major event was in January 1990 when over 300,000 Ukrainians formed a human chain between Kyiv and Lviv in support of independence. A few months later, on August 24th 1991 – in response to an unsuccessful coup in Moscow – the Ukrainian parliament passed the Act of Independence. That proclamation was overwhelmingly supported by Ukrainians when over 92% voted in support in a referendum on December 1st. Majorities in every region, including Crimea and the Donbas, voted in favour. The secession of Ukraine – the 2nd-most powerful state in the USSR – ended any realistic hope of keeping the Soviet Union together. It is 25 years this August 24th since that momentous and courageous decision was taken by Ukrainian politicians. In light of that – happy 25th anniversary Ukraine!

Lee Reaney, Editor at Lviv Today

